

## IELTS Reading Test 1

### Reading Passage 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 1-14**, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.

#### **London wins Olympics 2012 event will be secure, pledges capital's mayor**

**By Paul Kelso**

When he arrived in Singapore to give his speech for London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games last week Sebastian Coe brought with him a secret weapon: 30 children. Where rival bids filled their 100 allotted seats in the Raffles hotel auditorium with suits, London presented the International Olympic Committee (IOC) with a grinning multiracial example of the city's potential.

It was to prove inspired, although Lord Coe and his team had to wait six hours before they knew it. London's victory was announced only after a presentation ceremony that scaled new heights of kitsch. Two Singaporean sopranos and a tenor subjected the Olympic anthem, a tune whose primary virtue is to be heard only once every four years, to a fearful mauling.

Eventually the IOC president, Jacques Rogge, recovered his composure and requested the envelope bearing the name of the winning city. It was brought to him on a silk pillow by a 15-year-old sailor cadet in the Singaporean navy. An excruciating preamble ensued, followed by one sweet word: "London". Coe and Co had secured 54 votes to 50 for the favourite, Paris, in the final run-off.

At the G8 summit in Gleneagles, Tony Blair found the build-up unbearable. He was attempting to calm his nerves with a walk in the hotel grounds when the announcement was made. Downing Street broke the news to him on his mobile. "We have won! We have won!" the

official screamed. According to his own account, the prime minister punched the air, did a jig and embraced his startled chief of staff, Jonathan Powell.

Mr Blair, who had helped to lay the groundwork for victory during three days of intense one-to-one lobbying of IOC members, said hard work had paid off: "We had the right message that we wanted, a strong message for the Olympic mood." Where Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris had sought to reassure and flatter the IOC with presidential promises and high-budget tourism videos, Lord Coe set out a challenge to a movement sometimes more concerned with its internal politics than its mission. "Some might say your decision today is between five similar bids. That would be to undervalue the opportunity before you," he said. "In the past you have made bold decisions. This is a decision about which city will help us show a new generation why sport matters. On behalf of the youth of today, the athletes of tomorrow and the Olympians of the future, we humbly submit the bid of London 2012." London's mayor Ken Livingstone and the Metropolitan Police commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, insisted that the London 2012 Olympics would be secure despite last week's terrorist attacks. "We have reassured the IOC that we have the security to handle the games," said Mr Livingstone, adding that the Metropolitan Police had been involved in the advisory group for the Athens games. "The IOC know, through the experience of the 1972 Munich Olympics, that there is nowhere that can ever be completely safe but there is nowhere that will be safer than London," he said.

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page 13*

### Questions 1-3

Complete the following sentences with **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** from Reading Passage 1. Write your answers in boxes 1-3 on your answer sheet.

- 1 The 30 children were Coe's \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2 The seats of London's competitors were filled with \_\_\_\_\_.
- 3 The IOC was shown an example of London's \_\_\_\_\_.

### Questions 4-7

Do the following statements agree with the writer's opinion in Reading Passage 1? In boxes 4-7 on your answer sheet write:

- YES** if the statement agrees with the writer's opinion  
**NO** if the statement contradicts the writer's opinion  
**NOT GIVEN** if there is no information about the writer's opinion in the Passage

- 4 London's presentation turned out brilliantly.
- 5 The Olympic anthem was performed well.
- 6 More members of the IOC should have voted for London in the final vote.
- 7 Tony Blair over-reacted to the announcement of London's successful bid.

### Questions 8-14

Complete the summary below. Choose **One Word Only** from the text. Write your answers in boxes 8-14 on your answer sheet.

According to Mr Blair, London had a persuasive **8** \_\_\_\_\_, which was in keeping with the Olympic mood. While the respective presidents for Madrid, Moscow, New York and Paris made **9** \_\_\_\_\_ to the IOC and used expensive videos to make them confident about their bids and also to **10** \_\_\_\_\_ them, Coe aimed to challenge the Committee. The IOC is at times more **11** \_\_\_\_\_ with its own politics rather than with what it is supposed to do. Mr Coe told the Committee that their **12** \_\_\_\_\_ was about which city would help show young people why **13** \_\_\_\_\_ is important. He then presented the **14** \_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of the youth of today, the athletes of tomorrow and the Olympians of the future.

## Reading Passage 2

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 15-28**, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.

### Trick and cheat

By Alok Jha

There's no denying the effects of a good magic trick. From the great escapes of Houdini and the surreal mental trickery of Derren Brown to the conjurers at children's parties, the appeal is universal.

"Magic's been around for a very long time and it improves over time," says Richard Wiseman, a professor of psychology at Hertfordshire University. "What you're looking at when you see a finished piece of magic is a great deal of expertise, and I think psychologists have a lot to learn from that."

But, not content with just enjoying the tricks, psychologists are now using their effects on the mind to work out how we handle the floods of sensory information coming into our brains and process it into a mental picture of the world around us. Magic is a deception, a disruption of that orderly mental picture where things seem to float in mid-air or coins and cards vanish in front of our eyes. Scientists now believe that, by mapping out how our brains are deceived, they could even help to unlock some of the mysteries of consciousness itself.

"Over the last five years, there's been a reawakening as we look at things like change blindness [a failure to see large changes in a visual scene] and at the fact that consciousness is a construction and may even be an illusion," says Wiseman, himself an accomplished magician and member of the Magic Circle. "Now there's a recognition that magicians are doing something very special."

Magic is all about convincing others that the impossible has just happened. And that deception is achieved with a high degree of skill and showmanship.

"We're starting to realise that magicians have a lot of implicit knowledge about how we perceive

the world around us because they have to deceive us in terms of controlling attention, exploiting the assumptions we make when we do and don't notice a change in our environment," says Wiseman. "There is an enormous amount of really detailed instruction on how to perform magic."

A card trick that lasts four or five minutes, for example, might have 20 pages of detailed text to describe exactly where to look, what to say, what to do and so on. And a lot of the understanding of a trick has to be from the perspective of the audience.

While the magician's dexterity is important, the audience is also a vital participant in the deception. After all, it is in their minds that the illusion is created. "Magicians seem to be able to carry out secret actions in front of their audience without being spotted. I'm interested in why people don't perceive those actions," says Gustav Kuhn, a psychologist at Durham University.

A simple example of misdirection is used in the coin drop trick. "What you're doing there is pretending to take the coin from one hand to the other but, in fact, leaving it in the original hand," says Wiseman. "What's important is that you're looking where you want the audience to look. In terms of movement, you're moving the hand that doesn't contain the coin to attract people's attention over to that hand."

Psychologists can use such tricks to catch a glimpse into how our minds interpret the world around us. "Magicians are manipulating your consciousness. They are showing you something impossible," says Wiseman. "They're getting you to construct a narrative which simply isn't true. So that means they know how to make you aware of certain things and blind to other things. What I'm hoping is that magic, this entertainment vehicle that has been around for a long time, will give us a real insight into the deep mysteries of consciousness."

Our brains filter out a huge amount of the mass of sensory input flooding in. Kuhn explains that we see what we expect to see and what our brains are interested in. "Our visual representation of the world is much more impoverished than we would assume. People can be looking at something without being aware of it. Perception doesn't just involve looking at an object but attending to it."

In Kuhn's recent work, he performed a trick where a cigarette seems to disappear. It involved no sleight of hand or secret. It was a simple case of dropping the cigarette into his lap. "It happens right in front of the spectator's eyes but I misdirect their attention away from the cigarette," says Kuhn.

While his spectators watched, they wore eye trackers. It is known that we only receive high-quality information from the area we are fixated on, right in the centre of our field of view. If you stretch out your arm, it is about two thumbs' width at the centre of your vision – everything else is pretty much blurred. The way we compensate for this is to move our eyes around to fill in the gaps and create a better picture of the world around us.

Kuhn's results, to be published in the journal *Perception*, showed that simply staring at the location of the deception was not enough for people to discover how the trick happened.

"People could be looking very close to where the cigarette was being dropped without even seeing it," he says. "Other people were looking quite far away but they did actually spot the cigarette."

"What it shows is just how much of the picture in our head of our surroundings is a massive construction, based on expectations, what we think is important, what we normally encounter and so on," says Wiseman. "And that's what magicians are very good at exploiting."

Of course, magic is more than just surprise, so the researchers will be looking for something more. "When you're watching magic, there is just a split second when you're in disbelief and that's what we're looking for, that exact moment," according to Ben Parris at Exeter University's Centre for Cognitive Neuroscience. "The magic spot."

But while psychologists slowly get to grips with the way magicians manage to trick our brains, is there not a risk that the magic will lose its power? That it will cease to be amazing? Wiseman thinks not. "What we get is a more informed audience," he says. "It's a little bit like juggling – you appreciate the juggler more once you've tried to juggle three balls and then you suddenly realise how hard it is to juggle seven."

The research will have benefits for the practitioners of magic, too. "What they will realise is that the human mind is a lot more fallible than we magicians expect," says Kuhn. "Maybe magicians are too careful in the way they conceal their secrets in front of an audience. They can probably get away with quite a bit more."

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### Questions 15-19

The box below gives a list of answers **a-i** to the Questions 15-19. Answer the questions by choosing the correct answers **a-i**. Write your answers in boxes 15-19 on your answer sheet.

- 15 What did Wiseman say that a magic act contains?  
16 What are psychologists employing the effects of magic to do?  
17 What does Wiseman say that consciousness is?  
18 How are people deceived by magic?  
19 What are psychologists beginning to understand about magicians and their acts?

- a) The magic act has little skill but lots of know-how.
- b) Magicians have a lot of knowledge about how people see what is around them.
- c) They are taken in with a high degree of skill and showmanship.
- d) Consciousness is purely an illusion.
- e) Psychologists are now figuring out how people create a mental image of the masses of information the brain receives.
- f) Psychologists have a lot of knowledge about how people see what is around them.
- g) Consciousness is something which people construct and is possibly even an illusion.
- h) A finished piece of magic has a lot of skill or know-how.
- i) Magicians have difficulty understanding how people create a mental image of all the information the brain receives.

### Questions 20-27

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 2?  
In boxes 20-27 on your answer sheet write:

- TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information  
**FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information  
**NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

- 20 The performance of a card trick might require pages of instruction.  
21 The audience's perception of a trick is more important than the magician's ability to perform it.  
22 Psychologists can make use of the tricks that magicians employ.  
23 The human brain limits information coming into it.  
24 The picture people have in their heads of what they see is a construction of their expectations and so on.  
25 Magic does not just rely on the element of surprise.  
26 Research into magic will benefit neither the magicians nor psychologists.  
27 Magic will benefit psychologists and their patients considerably.

### Question 28

Choose the correct letter A, B, C, D or E. Write your answer in box 28 on your answer sheet.  
Which of the following is the most suitable title for Reading Passage 2?

- A How easily a psychologist can fool a patient
- B How easily a magician can fool an audience
- C Cheating patients
- D The way magicians perceive the world
- E The slowness of the human brain

### Reading Passage 3

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 29-40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.

#### Warming hits 'tipping point'

#### Climate change alarm as Siberian permafrost melts for first time since ice age

By Ian Sample

- a) A vast expanse of western Siberia is undergoing an unprecedented thaw that could dramatically increase the rate of global warming, climate scientists warned last week.

Researchers who have recently returned from the region found that an area of permafrost spanning a million square kilometres - the size of France and Germany combined - has started to melt for the first time since it formed 11,000 years ago at the end of the last ice age. The area, which covers the entire sub-Arctic region of western Siberia, is the world's largest frozen peat bog and scientists fear that as it thaws, it will release billions of tonnes of methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide, into the atmosphere.

- b) It is a scenario climate scientists have feared since first identifying "tipping points" - delicate thresholds where a slight rise in the Earth's temperature can cause a dramatic change in the environment that itself triggers a far greater increase in global temperatures. The discovery, made by Sergei Kirpotin at Tomsk State University in western Siberia and Judith Marquand at Oxford University, was reported in *New Scientist* last week.

The researchers found that what was until recently a barren expanse of frozen peat is turning into a broken landscape of mud and lakes, some more than a kilometre across.

Dr Kirpotin told the magazine the situation was an "ecological landslide that is probably irreversible and is undoubtedly connected to climatic warming". He added that the thaw had probably begun in the past three or four years.

- c) Climate scientists reacted with alarm to the finding, and warned that predictions of future global temperatures would have to be revised upwards.

"When you start messing around with these natural systems, you can end up in situations where it's unstoppable. There are no brakes you can apply," said David Viner, a senior scientist at the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia.

"This is a big deal because you can't put the permafrost back once it's gone. The causal effect is human activity and it will ramp up temperatures even more than our emissions are doing."

In its last major report in 2001, the intergovernmental panel on climate change predicted a rise in global temperatures of 1.4C-5.8C between 1990 and 2100, but the estimate only takes account of global warming driven by known greenhouse gas emissions.

"These positive feedbacks with landmasses weren't known about then. They had no idea how much they would add to global warming," said Dr Viner.

- d) Western Siberia is heating up faster than anywhere else in the world, having experienced a rise of some 3C in the past 40 years. Scientists are particularly concerned about the permafrost, because as it thaws, it reveals bare ground that warms up more quickly than ice and snow, and so accelerates the rate at which the permafrost thaws. Siberia's peat bogs have been producing methane since they formed at the end of the last ice age, but most of the gas had been trapped in the permafrost. According to Larry Smith, a hydrologist at the University of California, Los Angeles, the west Siberian peat bog could hold some 70bn tonnes of methane, a quarter of all of the methane stored in the ground around the world.

The permafrost is likely to take many decades to thaw, so the methane locked within it will not be released into the atmosphere in one burst, said Stephen Sitch, a climate scientist at the British Met Office's Hadley Centre in Exeter.

But calculations by Dr Sitch and his colleagues show that even if methane seeped from the permafrost over the next 100 years, it would add around 700m tonnes of carbon into the atmosphere each year, roughly the same amount that is released annually from the world's wetlands and agriculture.

It would effectively double atmospheric levels of the gas, leading to a 10% to a 25% increase in global warming, he said. Tony Juniper, director of Friends of the Earth, said the finding was a stark message to politicians to take concerted action on climate change. "We knew at some point we'd get these feedbacks happening that exacerbate global warming, but this could lead to a massive injection of greenhouse gases."

- e) "If we don't take action very soon, we could unleash runaway global warming that will be beyond our control and it will lead to social, economic and environmental devastation worldwide," he said. "There's still time to take action, but not much."

Last May another group of researchers reported signs that global warming was damaging the permafrost. Katey Walter of the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, told a meeting of the Arctic Research Consortium of the US that her team had found methane hotspots in eastern Siberia. Last month some of the world's worst air polluters, including the US and Australia, announced a partnership to cut greenhouse gas emissions through the use of new technologies.

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### Questions 29-33

Reading Passage 3 has five sections labelled a-e. Which paragraph contains the information below? Write the correct letter in boxes 29-33 on your answer sheet.

- 29 The irreversible melting of the permafrost, caused by global warming, is an example of a tipping point.
- 30 Methane escaping from the Siberian permafrost will increase global warming.
- 31 Action can and needs to be taken to halt the emission of greenhouse gasses.
- 32 A vast area of permafrost is thawing.
- 33 The projected increase in temperatures caused by global warming will have to be increased.

### Questions 34-39

Look at the statements (Questions 34-39) and the list of people in the box below. Match each statement with the correct person **A-F**. Write the correct letter in boxes 34-39 on your answer sheet. (NB: You may use any letter more than once.)

- 34 There is a possibility that the west Siberian peat bog holds billions of tons of methane.
- 35 Methane hotspots had been found in eastern Siberia.
- 36 It is unlikely that the changes in western Siberia can be reversed.
- 37 The melting of the Siberian permafrost was a warning to politicians.
- 38 The changes in the Siberian permafrost will increase temperatures more than gas emissions from humans.
- 39 The melting of the Siberian permafrost will probably take many years.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A Sergei Kirpotin</li><li>B Tony Juniper</li><li>C Stephen Stitch</li><li>D Larry Smith</li><li>E David Viner</li><li>F Katey Walter</li></ul> |
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### Question 40

Choose the correct letter **A, B, C, D** or **E**. Write your answer in box 40 on your answer sheet. Which of the following is the most suitable title for Reading Passage 3?

- A Researchers in Siberia
- B The point of no return
- C The Siberian permafrost
- D Warming hits 'tipping point'
- E Methane hotspots